

Ward 6 Staff



Steve Kozachik



Ann Charles



Diana Amado



Amy Stabler



Kate Kish



Caroline Lee



Ward 6 Newsletter

Tucson First

December 29, 2014

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For this last 2014 newsletter, I thought I'd look back on a month by month basis and see where we've been this year. We've covered a lot of ground, and many of the issues will roll over into 2015.

January – Gun Safety



Beginning with the January 7th Gun Safety forum we held at The Loft, the topic stayed in the news for the rest of the month, and continued on my plate even as recently as last week.

The Loft forum included both Sheriff Dupnik, and TPD Chief Villasenor, along with Clarke Romans from the National Alliance on Mental Illness, and Jeanette Mare from Ben's Bells. Lisa Kiser from UAMC and Peter Ambler representing Americans for Responsible Solutions were also on the panel. Jonathan joined me from the public policy side of the discussion. Jim Nintzel, now of the Sunday morning *Zona Politics* show, moderated the evening.

We touched on how to be alert to the warning signs of a suicidal person and treatment modalities that are available here in Tucson. The Mental Health First Aid program is being offered to downtown merchant employees – and may soon be expanded beyond that once the trainers are trained. Both Clarke and Jeanette spoke to the issue of breaking down the stigma that so often attaches to people who suffer



Important Phone Numbers

**Tucson Police
Department**
911 or nonemergency
791-4444

Water Issues
791-4133
Emergency: 791-4133

Street Maintenance
791-3154

Graffiti Removal
792-2489

**Abandoned
Shopping Carts**
791-3171

**Neighborhood
Resources**
837-5013

SunTran/SunLink
792-9222

**Environmental
Services**
791-3171

Park Wise
791-5071

**Planning and
Development
Services** 791-5550

**Pima County Animal
Control**
243-5900

**Pima County Vector
Control**
Cockroach: 443-6501
Mosquito: 740-2760

Continued: A Message From Steve

from mental health issues.

At the time, I was working from the New Hampshire Firearm Safety Coalition model of trying to get local gun stores to post suicide hotlines in their places of business. It is noteworthy that none of the retailers in Tucson stepped up and wanted to get involved. The message – don't put roadblocks in the way of them selling a weapon, regardless of the troubles a customer might be wrestling with.

The law enforcement guys shared their frustration over not being given mental health background information when investigating suspects. To their credit, the State Legislature passed a law in the '14 session changing that prohibition. It's an example of a common sense measure that has the safety of the public and the police in mind.

The Tucson M&C have led on the issue of gun safety. We adopted background check policies, adopted an Ordinance requiring people to advise police if their guns are lost or stolen, and to the extent we can under the State law preemption, we placed rules into place governing the use of alcohol while firing a weapon.

No magic bullets in any of that, but the forum kept the conversation on the news and did highlight some areas the State finally moved on later in the year. Another of those was finally joining the National Violent Death Reporting System, the means by which the Centers for Disease Control will gather gun death data from 32 states nationwide and use it to put together policy recommendations from a public health perspective.

There's work left to do, and the push back from the industry is still a problem. Just last week when I tried to enlist the cooperation of the National Sport Shooting Federation in bringing their teaching on how to recognize a 'straw purchase' to Tucson, the response was that I was trying to "co-opt" and "politicize" the issue. Sadly, the knees still jerk in the industry. But I opened the year trying to make progress in the area, closed the year still working on it, and will continue into 2015.

February – Puppies and More

This was the month in which several puppy-related initiatives were gaining steam. One of those was the Puppy Mill Ordinance I'd like to see finalized, and another was the decision to place Prop 415 (Pima Animal Care Center) on the November election ballot. In support of both of those we saw the Humane Society open a storefront to be used for adopting animals and PACC entering a nationwide contest seeking grant assistance for their operations.

The guts of the Puppy Mill Ordinance we voted on read like this:

4-8.1(2). PROHIBITIONS. IT SHALL BE UNLAWFUL FOR ANY PERSON TO DISPLAY, OFFER FOR SALE, DELIVER, BARTER, AUCTION, GIVE AWAY, TRANSFER OR SELL ANY DOG OR CAT IN ANY PET STORE, RETAIL BUSINESS OR OTHER COMMERCIAL ESTABLISHMENT LOCATED IN THE CITY UNLESS THE

DOG OR CAT WAS OBTAINED FROM ONE OF THE FOLLOWING SOURCES:

(A) AN ANIMAL SHELTER OR A HUMANE SOCIETY LOCATED IN PIMA COUNTY; OR

(B) A NON-PROFIT RESCUE AND HUMANE ORGANIZATION WHOSE MISSION AND PRACTICE IS, IN WHOLE OR IN SIGNIFICANT PART, THE RESCUE AND PLACEMENT OF DOGS OR CATS; OR

(C) A PRIVATE OWNER THAT DONATED, WITHOUT ANY CHARGE, FEE OR OTHER CONSIDERATION, THE DOG OR CAT TO THE PET STORE, RETAIL BUSINESS OR COMMERCIAL ESTABLISHMENT.

The goal, of course, is to reduce the stress being felt at all local shelters and rescues due to the proliferation of animals without homes that are brought to them. In addition, whatever dent we can make in shutting down the puppy mill industry is a good thing.

A lawsuit was filed against the City of Phoenix over a Puppy Mill Ordinance they passed shortly before we took up the issue. Our vote was to adopt our own Ordinance, but to put it on the back burner until the Phoenix litigation was completed so we would know what, if any, changes we'll have to insert before ours goes live. The Phoenix lawsuit will hopefully be answered early in 2015.

The original Pima Animal Care facility was built in 1968. They've made some incremental changes along the way, but the need to expand is undeniable. The long term answer is spay/neuter, and to that point I will continue to urge my colleagues on the M&C to allocate more funding to the County AWASA spay/neuter program. I've walked the talk by donating over \$10K to their work.

The Prop 415 campaign saw a little resistance, primarily from people who challenged the \$22M estimated cost for the new facility, but the majority of the public saw the value in expanding PACC and understood that the bonds will be sold only as they are needed to keep the project moving along. The measure passed, and the plans for the new facility are now being finalized.

And I'd be remiss if I didn't also mention the ongoing mess that South Tucson embraces: Tucson Greyhound Park. The ownership was told in an audit that if they didn't pour cash into the operation, it would go bankrupt. The fact that they did speaks to the money to be made from gaming and whatever other off-track financial opportunities the place offers to them. The collateral damage continues to be the dogs. The Department of Racing doesn't seem to care, so those of us who do will keep an open eye on their books, track conditions and the ongoing bilking of the taxpayers who are still funding operations from the State General Fund.

Breaking ground for the new PACC, seeing our Puppy Mill Ordinance put into effect, and seeing more dollars being allocated to the County spay/neuter program would be three good outcomes for the New Year. Saving lives, finding homes, and making the long term impact on the stray dog problem sounds like a good 'hat trick' to me.



Important Phone Numbers

Senator John
McCain (R)
520-670-6334

Senator Jeff
Flake (R)
520-575-8633

Congressman
Ron Barber (D)
(2nd District)
520-881-3588

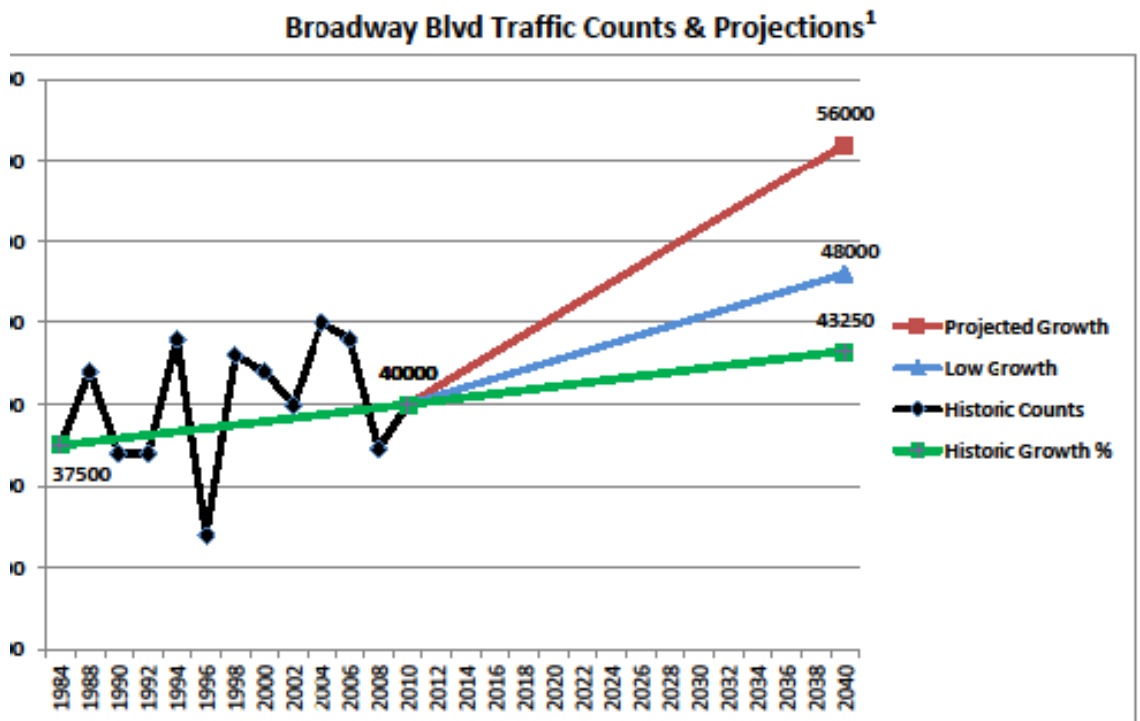
Congressman
Raul Grijalva (D)
(3rd District)
520-622-6788

Governor Janice
Brewer (R)
602-542-4331
Tucson office:
628-6580

Mayor Jonathan
Rothschild
791-4201

ZoomTucson Map
[http://
maps.tucsonaz.gov/
/zoomTucson/](http://maps.tucsonaz.gov/zoomTucson/)

March – Broadway Widening



- 1984 to 2010 (26 years) = increase of 2,500 ADT
- Traffic Model Projection 2010 to 2040 (30 years) = increase of 16,000 ADT (???)

Doesn't reflect recent research on new transportation trends

1. AZDOT Study – Compact, Mixed –use Development Leads to Less Traffic (May 2012)
2. Has the US Reached Peak Car (Scientific American, July 2012)
3. Public Transportation Ridership Use Surged in First Quarter 2012 (American Public Transportation Association, June 2012)
4. The Future Isn't What It Used To Be; Changing Trends and Their Implications for Transport Planning (Abstract, Victoria Transport Policy Institute, July 2012)
5. Transportation and the New Generation; Why Young People are Driving Less and What it Means for Transportation Policy (Executive Summary, Frontier Group/US PIRG Education Fund, April 2012)

With the amount of time and effort dozens of people have put into the RTA Broadway widening project, I could list this item every month of the year. The graph shown above is what the voters were relying on back in 2006 to approve the \$71M project. None of the projections have proven to be close to accurate. And, as noted in the middle of the graphic, even those who continue to push for the ultimate widening to 150' concede the traffic modeling “doesn't reflect recent research on new transportation trends.”

March was the time when the Citizen's Task Force studying Broadway really began to chip away at options for the design and width of the roadway. The property acquisition

costs varied wildly, depending on the width and the proposed alignment. Most of what was under consideration busted the project budget just on the Real Estate component. To date, not much of what's under consideration respects the 'new transportation trends.'

Late in the year the M&C voted to move the design forward with a baseline 6 lane, 118' wide roadway. When and how the transit element is incorporated into those 6 lanes and where the roadway narrows and weaves to avoid the destruction of homes and businesses is work left to do. That work is currently in the hands of staff, but the Office of Integrated Planning continues to meet with stakeholders as a conduit by which input from the 'outside' can still be made a part of the planning process.

One thing – and about only one thing – is for sure. We have to set the alignment. The uncertainty is causing blight along the corridor as businesses and other private property owners are reluctant to invest in and make upgrades to their structures until they know where the roadway is going to go. Getting that decision made has got to be the number one priority for staff, and ultimately for M&C. The work toward that end has been going on for far too long. Here's hoping the result demonstrates creativity and clarity of purpose respecting preservation of both the structures and the roadway's function. We hear buzz words such as 'sense of place' and 'context sensitive design.' Many are waiting to see how those phrases end up being manifested in the proposal that will come to us early in 2015.

April – Sick Leave Sell Back

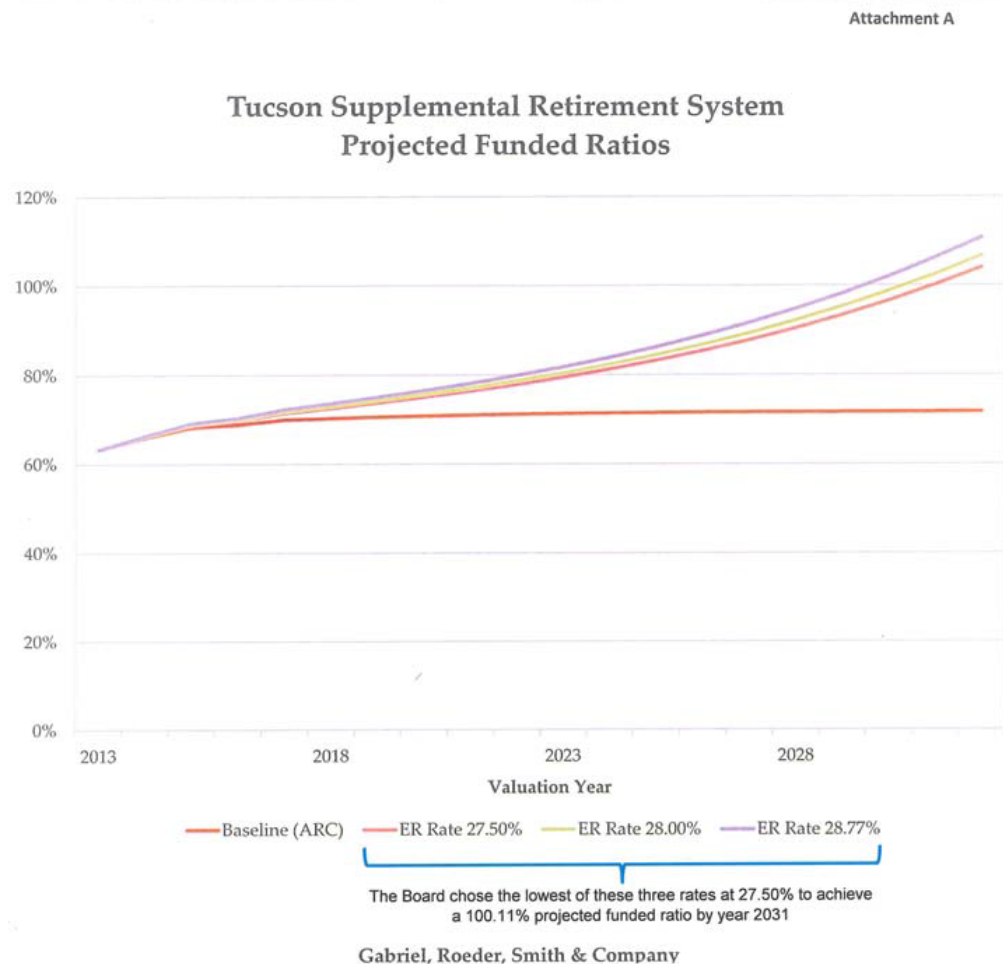
In April, our budget discussions began to take greater form. A part of that I inserted was the elimination of the sick leave sell back program. Broaching that topic led in a few different directions – talking about our General Fund, talking about pension reform, and the erosion of some relationships that I had felt were on more solid ground than they ended up proving to be.

Sick leave sell back is the program by which long term members of our public safety agencies can accumulate sick leave and, at the end of the year, sell it back for cash. The amount that can be sold back varies depending on years of service. It tops out at being able to bump your salary by 10% in a given year. I took the position that the intent of sick leave was to keep you whole if you're sick, not to give a salary boost at year's end to senior staff. Those dollars are effectively being shifted from what could be increases in entry level pay.

In addition to selling back the sick leave, the City was allowing those dollars to be added to employees' pensionable income. That's called 'spiking,' and I called on the City Attorney to formally address that policy in comparison to State law. The law is clear: you may not use sold back sick leave to increase your pay for the purpose of increasing your pensionable income. Eventually last summer, the City announced an end to that policy, bringing us in line with the law.

What we have not yet done though is to make provision to 'clawback' what we previously added to peoples' pensionable incomes from the sick leave sell back policy *before* they retire so we're not in effect allowing that violation of the law to simply continue – pretty much forever as it relates to an individual's pension payments. I intend to revisit that topic early in 2015. It's the law.

One good outcome of our addressing the pension issue was the M&C adopting a significant pension policy change called the 'round up rule.' Very generally, that involves us rounding up by a small percentage the amount needed to fully fund our pension in a given year. The result, all other things being equal, will be our ability to fully fund the Plan in twenty years, versus only being at 71% funded in that same time frame. Here's a chart that shows the impact:



We have work to do on the pension plan, and we have an annual challenge we address with our budget. But the 'round up' step we took was a good one. Likewise, the conversation about sick leave sell back – in all of its manifestations – was necessary. We haven't eliminated it yet, but labor discussions are currently on-going and I expect it to be a part of what's addressed.

As to the 'clawback' issue – it's front and center for the turn of the New Year.

May - Budget

The singular issue that has routinely separated me in how I vote from the rest of the M&C is our budget. For the fifth consecutive year, we divided 6-1. We're not alone in the State in having to make tough decisions when it comes to how we spend your money. Last summer, the Phoenix City Council voted to retain all City services, but they chose to increase fees and taxes to solve their own budget shortfall.

We 'balanced' our budget by taking on more debt, laying off workers, giving a pay increase, making no changes to the efficiency of our bus routes, allowing zero increase in the transit fares, and keeping our sick leave sell back policy in place. We again relied on one-time fixes such as the sale of land to get us across the finish line.

There were some bright spots that came out of our budget process. One of the bright spots was being able to retain some of the Parks and Recreation Department employees who had initially been targeted for layoff. In the past five years, our Parks operations budget has been reduced by \$7M. The effects are seen in upkeep and maintenance of some of our facilities. Keeping P&R workers on the job will help to stop that degradation.

Another important part of what came out of the budget talks was the implementation of a new bargaining process. It's called Civic Openness in Negotiations (COIN). The City of Costa Mesa began this process, and it was that model that I asked the City Manager to consider last summer. Essentially, it brings in a neutral third party to manage the negotiation process between the City and employee unions, and it makes the costs of the various benefits being negotiated public. That way, before we vote to approve a new pay/benefits package, we'll see what each piece of it will cost. My intent was to be able to look at things such as sick leave sell back and other non-base pay compensation so we can do two things: reduce our personnel costs and, where it makes sense, shift some of those hidden benefits over to base pay so we're more competitive in the market place.

One of these years we'll begin our budget talks with something closer to balance than we have been presented in each of the past five budgets. Even then we may still disagree on what to do with any surplus, but the process may move ahead more smoothly than in the past. We're due to see our first budget projection early in the new year. It's the most important thing we manage as a governing body.

June – Economic Development

The budget issues will persist until we turn the corner of successful economic development.

In June, we moved two important projects forward in the process, both of which have the potential of attracting significant dollars into our local economy. One of the projects was the AC Marriott downtown hotel, and the other project was the mixed use project being proposed for the NW corner of Speedway and Campbell.



It's important to note that neither of these is a student housing project.

The Marriott project has passed its economic analysis and is moving forward through the Development Agreement process. If all goes well, they should break ground early next year. The Speedway project has a longer road ahead of it. They'll con-

tinue through the rezoning process, a part of which will be design modifications. The project team has already engaged multiple stakeholders so that design will be informed by input from a variety of directions. They're right now also approaching prospective tenants and discussing space needs and lease terms with each. Flowing from all of that will be refinements in design, putting into place a financing package, and if things move ahead as now envisioned, some construction starting in 2016.

The Marriott reflects a shift in the way we're managing downtown core development. We have plenty of student housing between the UA and downtown. We're now seeing an emphasis on travelers, as well as people who want to live in the downtown urban environment. A grocery store, restaurants, theater, and more of the amenities that people other than a college student will want are going in. The Marriott's a step towards that.

Early next year we'll be asked to consider incentives aimed at continuing the infill development we've seen in and around downtown over the past five years. The projects shown here are good examples of a shift we should be facilitating. An economy can't grow simply on building more and more student towers, managed by out-of-state developers. You put incentives into place to attract the kind of development that's needed and wanted. That's the direction I'll be supporting, and it's reflected in these two projects.

July – Project Mariposa



In July, we at the Ward 6 office jumped with both feet into the issue of migrant families being dropped at our Greyhound bus depot. Project Mariposa was met with a combination of widespread community volunteer support, and some rather ugly and misinformed pushback by others. The families we were assisting were here legally, having been processed through the Immigration and Customs Enforcement system, and were travelling to new destinations to await their status hearings.

Numerous nonprofits and faith-based groups got involved in providing for the women and their children. Those groups included Catholic Community Services, the Jewish Federation, the YWCA, among many others. The driving and sustaining group, though, were the volunteer citizens who simply saw a need and took their time and resources to help out.

The families we saw had been through multiple days of travel through Central America and Mexico. They arrived here with language barriers, needing food, clothing, oftentimes medical assistance, and help in sorting through their travel itineraries. Most were from Guatemala. It wasn't until this month that the Guatemalan government opened a Consulate office in Tucson. Until then, it was locals who carried their burden.

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The issue attracted international media attention. I did interviews with reporters from all

over the country and even from European news sources. While we had State and Federal legislators trying to “send them back,” the Project Mariposa team saw human needs and worked to address them. The ‘back’ to which these women and kids were being sent in many cases was a literal death sentence. We thought there was another way to address the situation.

Public dollars were not spent on this project. The families continue to be dropped at the intake center that’s managed by the nonprofits. We at Ward 6 continue to be a deposit site for donated goods. Things such as Cup of Soup, socks, blankets, and travel-sized hygiene products are still welcomed.

In too many cases, Arizona self-imposes an international black-eye. In many of those cases, Tucsonans show that we’re not afraid to stand tall for the needy. Project Mariposa was one such example.

August – Certificates of Participation

Certificates of Participation (COPs) are debt instruments that do not require taxpayer approval for us to take on. A simple majority vote of the M&C is all that’s needed. In addition, they do not count against our Charter imposed debt limit of \$1.75 per \$100 of assessed property valuation. We currently owe over \$250M in COPs debt. That’s more than our outstanding Bond indebtedness. Our current obligations are:

GO Bonds - \$214,760,000

COPs Debt - \$259,235,000

COPs debt is serviced through our General Fund. Right now we pay over \$25M annually in debt service for COPs, and until this year, there was no limit on how much COP debt we could take on. Every penny of it competed against road repair, public safety, Parks and Recreation, Code Enforcement and all of our other General Fund obligations. I thought we needed some controls built into our policies, and in August brought the issue to M&C for that discussion.

There were three areas of primary concern. One was the public process that was absent from taking on more debt. Another was the fact that there was no limit on the amount of debt we could absorb. I also objected to the way we bundle all of our COPs debt together so that in the event we failed to pay on one of them, all of our quarter billion dollars of assets tied to COPs would be subject to exposure. August saw us send staff back to work on these areas with the direction to return with some new policies.

In public policy, it’s rare that you get all you’re after. Perhaps that’s as it should be, since we should be in the business of balancing multiple community voices and needs. In the case of our COPs policy, I was pleased to finally put into place new standards by which:

- a) We will not take on more COP debt without first holding public hearings on what’s being considered.
- b) We have placed a limit on how much COP debt we can assume.

We will continue to bundle all of the debt together. That’s the part I find troubling, but I al-

so understand the rationale behind it (that is, it makes the debt more attractive to lenders because it's virtually impossible for us to default on any of it).

I don't think any of the controls we adopted will hamper our ability to provide needed services to you. On the contrary, without those controls, the General Fund was open to being hit with debt service about which you had no voice. As with several other issues I'm reviewing in this retrospective, this was not an easy, but it was a necessary topic for us to engage.

September – TUSD

Two governing bodies, each responsible for large groups of constituents who often overlap, cannot operate in silos from one another. That has largely been the way the City and TUSD have dealt with one another. I was pleased to be a part of breaking down some of those walls this year, culminating in a TUSD committee appointment for Amy in September.

Throughout the year TUSD was moving forward with school sales, installation of solar arrays on school sites, repurposing of vacant schools, and other policy decisions that directly impacted Ward 6 residents. Headlines in the Star raised concerns over the sale of Ft. Lowell Elementary School. The announced move of the Dodge Middle School student body over to Townsend got the attention of residents in adjacent neighborhoods. Many of the neighborhoods around schools targeted for solar arrays were troubled by the location of where the panels were going to be installed. Through a series of phone calls and emails, I was able to get several joint City/TUSD meetings established to address the respective issues.

Amy's committee assignment was to participate in plans for moving Dodge over to Townsend. After a few meetings, TUSD announced that they didn't have enough funding to remodel Townsend, and so that move is off the table for now. Being a part of the planning was important for the Ward office, though. We get the calls. We need a seat at that table.

We also participated in presentations relative to the sale of Ft. Lowell Elementary and the siting of solar panels. I believe it was important for Ward 6 residents to see that we're engaged with TUSD on these important quality of life issues. It took a while, but with the confluence of these several issues, any inadvertent barriers that may have existed are now breached, and we'll move ahead in a good spirit of cooperation and communication.

I'll touch more on School Resource Officers below, but it's another example of how our two governing bodies need close interrelations. By each operating in somewhat of a vacuum from one another, we came within a gnat's eyelash (didn't know they had them, did you?) of losing over \$1M in grant money that'll put SROs into TUSD schools. We crossed that finish line together though (see November, below).

With so much going on, it's incumbent on all of us (and I'd toss in the Board of Supervisors and State Legisla-



J. A. Davidson, U of MD

ture, too) to be intentional about ensuring our counterparts know what we're up to when our decisions impact co-constituents. We made strides in that this year with TUSD.

October – Project RAISE

The goal of Project RAISE is to find Responsible Alternatives to Incarceration for the Sexually Exploited. It's the initiative we started a couple of years ago when I was looking for ways to reduce our General Fund budget costs. A first time offense for prostitution carries mandatory jail time. That costs the City, and it does absolutely nothing in terms of helping the victims of prostitution to their lives around. We studied models used in other jurisdictions and ended up with this collaborative effort that we've now done four times. Much of the planning for the event takes place weeks in advance of the actual RAISE event, so I'm comfortable listing this in October, even though our second RAISE for 2014 actually took place in early November.

The reason these events take a while to plan is the number of agencies that are involved. From the City we have the cooperation of TPD, the City Prosecutor, and City Court. There's also a City diversion program called DOVE that serves as the focus of the 'responsible alternative' to jail. Nonprofits are also involved in RAISE. Those include the Tucson Women's Commission, Southern Arizona Against Slavery, and Willow Way (trafficking survivors). Our Savior's Lutheran Church is an important partner as it serves as our intake center each time we stage one of these nights. There's also a cab driver (will go unnamed because I don't want him getting in trouble for moonlighting) who donates his time to drive the women home after they've been released by the Court. Coordinating the involvement, timing, and implementation of those groups doesn't happen overnight. Ann Charles from our office has taken the lead in bringing the players to the table and putting the details into place.

As a result of the four RAISE events we've conducted, at least twenty women have begun diversion, skipping the jail option and electing to give life a second chance outside of the prostitution subculture. We have also built relationships that allowed me to introduce some of the survivors to State Representative Victoria Steele. The result – legislation will be introduced this term in Phoenix that will allow trafficking victims to appeal to have their records of conviction expunged. It is treating the victim as a victim, which is not what the law currently does.



Each time we do one of these, we learn a little more. We added a transportation element, brought in some medical help, involved FBI for possible trafficking of minors, and are still working to get some of the Court workers to fully buy into the goals of the program. I realize that it's a mental culture shift for them, but getting some out of the box thinking will open doors for women who are otherwise society's cast-offs. More on this early next year – the results so far are rewarding.

November – Priority Enforcement

I mentioned above the issues we were having with TUSD and getting SROs into their schools. We were taking the position that school resource officers (SROs) have to ask immigration status questions if they were conducting a criminal investigation. TUSD said those questions cannot be asked at any time by police on school grounds. Both sides had their legal advice on the issue, so we were at an impasse.

On November 20th, President Obama delivered a speech in which he announced new rules of engagement between law enforcement and the public. One part is called Priority Enforcement. At its core, it says Immigration and Customs Enforcement will not ask for suspects in a crime to be transferred to their custody unless the person is guilty of some specifically called out crimes. Those called out are significant and serious. The following day I had a request into our City Attorney asking him to issue an opinion on how the new rules affected our position on SROs asking status questions. My reasoning – why ask the question if ICE wasn't going to ask for the person to be transferred, anyway?

The immediate result was a change in our legal position that allowed us to amend the Intergovernmental Agreement between ourselves and TUSD so the language aligned and we could move forward with the grant money for the SROs. Getting them into the schools is a matter of safety for the kids, and it is a means by which they can build relationships with law enforcement officers in a healthy environment. The negative impacts of SB1070 have hurt those relationships, so I'm of the firm opinion that this was an important opportunity that we'd have regretted losing had we not found a way forward.

The issue of the new rules will result in further changes in our TPD General Orders early next year. The City of South Tucson made some wholesale changes in how they interact with residents. Their changes predated the 11/20 Priority Enforcement announcement. With the new rules in place, and the precedent set by South Tucson, some of us on the M&C see a way forward to amend our own policies in ways that protect the rights of residents, protect the safety of the public, protect the safety of Police officers, and generally ease the stresses that 1070 has placed on the community. That conversation will take place on January 21st.

The Executive Action taken by the President, followed by new regulations handed down by Homeland Security, opened some doors for us. Getting SROs into our schools was one result. More to come in short order.

December – Student Towers / Irresponsible Ownership



That's a picture of two of the new student towers at Park and Speedway while they were under construction. In the lower right background is the dome of the Islamic Center of Tucson. The events that culminated in December demonstrate that, although the buildings have been finished, the relationship between the ownership of the towers, the residents of the towers, the Mosque community, and the surrounding community in general is still under construction.

After learning that the Mosque had been the recipient of a year's worth of debris being rained down on them from the towers, and hearing that one of the towers had been holding outdoor concerts up on the 11th floor, I called the parties together to sort through the mess. The parties included the City Attorney, TPD, the UA Dean of Students, the UA Community Relations folks, the leadership of the Mosque, and residents from surrounding neighborhoods. Oh, and the owners of the towers.

The results have been mildly satisfying. Video cameras are up and operating to identify people who continue to toss things from the outdoor balconies. Red tags have been issued to some areas at one of the towers. Five people have been evicted from one of the towers. The debris has been cleaned from the roof of the Mosque.

And a fourth tower is under design, a part of which will be yet more outdoor balconies. There's a design review meeting on January 15th to talk further about that design feature.

Albert Einstein is quoted as having said 'insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting a different result.'

Also in the aftermath of the bottle throwing incidents, I brought those same parties together for a more broad community conversation about what we as a City and the University do about irresponsible owners of housing projects. Whether those properties are occupied by students or not, residents of the City have a right to both the quiet enjoyment of their own property and to not be surrounded by blight in the form of various Code violations. There was another subsequent meeting with our City Attorney, Planning and Code Enforcement staff, and some residents who are active in Tucson Residents for Responsive Government – the purpose was to identify holes in our Code Enforcement process and explore ways to fill them with policy and/or resources.

This is an important issue that will have impacts on development projects that are right now being proposed. Earlier I noted that 'we've got plenty of student housing.' To the extent that we're going to offer incentives for development, those incentives should go toward building what we need to continue the progress we've seen in the resurgence of our downtown core and the areas between it and campus. That conversation will be coming in January. Once school resumes at the UA after the holidays, we'll see if the residents of the towers have remembered what we discussed at length in December. Everybody's in zero tolerance mode.

Postscript –

I didn't mention the streetcar opening, and issues we face with bike accidents on the tracks (there are still areas TDOT needs to address along the route). I also didn't mention the film industry and putting together a local incentive package. I didn't touch on issues related to water conversation incentives, the Best Friends Spay/Neuter Grant we finally adopted with the County, or even the McKale renovations, impact fees, and much more. It was a busy year. I suspect next year will prove to be the same.

Through it all, I've tried to keep things light. To that end, I've included below some of my favorite comics from the '14 newsletters. At the time, they each poked fun at the issue I was addressing. Or, in the area of techy stuff and flip phones, they poked fun at me. Don't take

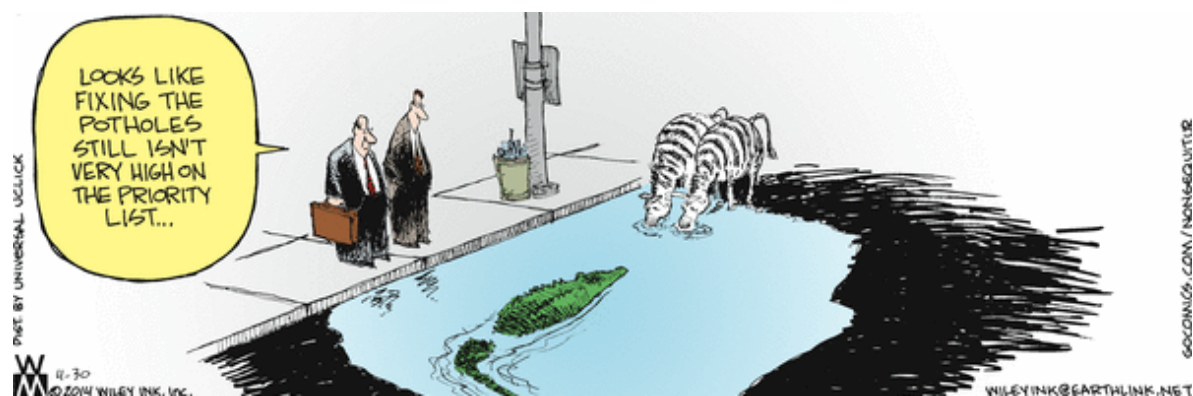
yourself too seriously. Even without the context of the topic I was addressing, they're fun on their own, too.

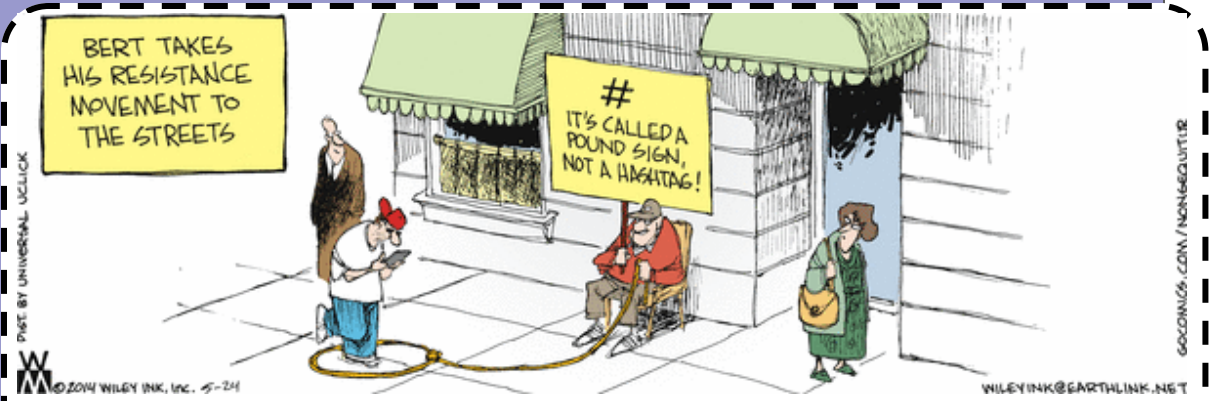
Have a safe and happy New Year.



(This was inflicted on me by my staff as a way of prodding me to get a haircut. I know the primary guilty party and can attest that she was on Santa's naughty list this year, for the second year in a row.)

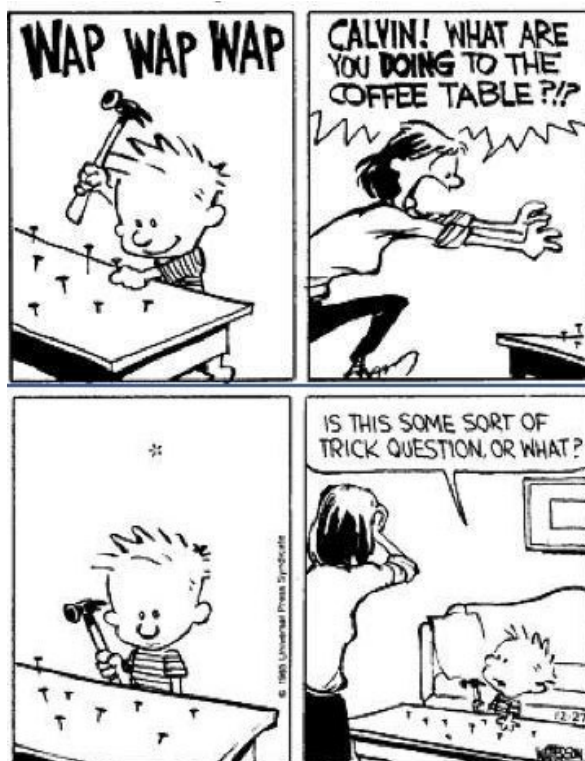






WELL, CATS TEND TO STAY OUT OF YOUR WAY, REQUIRE FAR LESS WORK THAN KIDS AND ARE LESS EXPENSIVE THAN KIDS.





And this'll go out on December 29th. That's our wedding anniversary – number 36, give or take a year. We're best friends, and I'm lucky she puts up with a bunch of my 'stuff.'

Sincerely,

Steve Kozachik

Steve Kozachik
Council Member, Ward 6
Ward6@tucsonaz.gov